

Dear Appropriation Committee Members,

On behalf of Connecticut's Even Start Director's Coalition, please consider the continued funding of this program in the state budget for Fiscal Year 2014. While it may represent a small portion of CT's families, its potential to be brought to a larger scale and its return on investment capabilities have received national attention and have proven positive measurable outcomes.

With the trend towards bringing learning into the home and two generation learning, Connecticut's Even Start Program has been highlighted in The Even Start National Newsletter for its outreach with families whose primary language in the home is other than English and young parents who have not completed high school. Even Start's framework and highly experienced staff have proved that true family engagement can create positive outcomes that are not only measured by student academic achievement but with community connectedness and economic impact. In fact according to a preliminary Return on Investment Study conducted by University of Connecticut g Even Start graduate's average annual household income increased by 40% and a had 29% decrease in housing rental assistance. Furthermore, Even Start's Results Based Accountability has illustrated commendable results for parents and children with respect to English Language acquisition and reading readiness.

In addition, CT Even Start is in dialogue with the Ascend The Aspen Institute's Two Generation Literacy Initiative (ascend.aspeninstitute.org). In the most recent phone conference, CT was applauded for its outreach and education with local and state legislators in order to sustain this effective program. Most notably was CT's procurement of funding from a Private Foundation, Newman's Own, to carry out a study that ties dollars to outcomes of Even Start's graduates which in the long run creates a positive fiscal note.

Even Start's ability to work cross agency is another example of how this work can be brought to scale. Recently, a meeting was convened with DCF and Adult Education with the focus of sharing resources, examining policies and brainstorming ideas to deliver more streamlined services to families that are shared across agencies. The results of this collaboration have created changes in Even Start's local communities that were simple and effective. This work was planned to continue and reach out to other agencies including DSS and Department of Labor.

To reconstruct what already exists would cost the state far more than keeping this program funded and using it as a lead experience for the state's two generation and young parent literacy initiatives. Please keep Connecticut on the forefront of this work and continue to support this comprehensive literacy model. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Donna Labbe

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